



Souvenir of the
TWENTY-FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY

OF
GAIETY
THEATRE

27TH NOVEMBER,

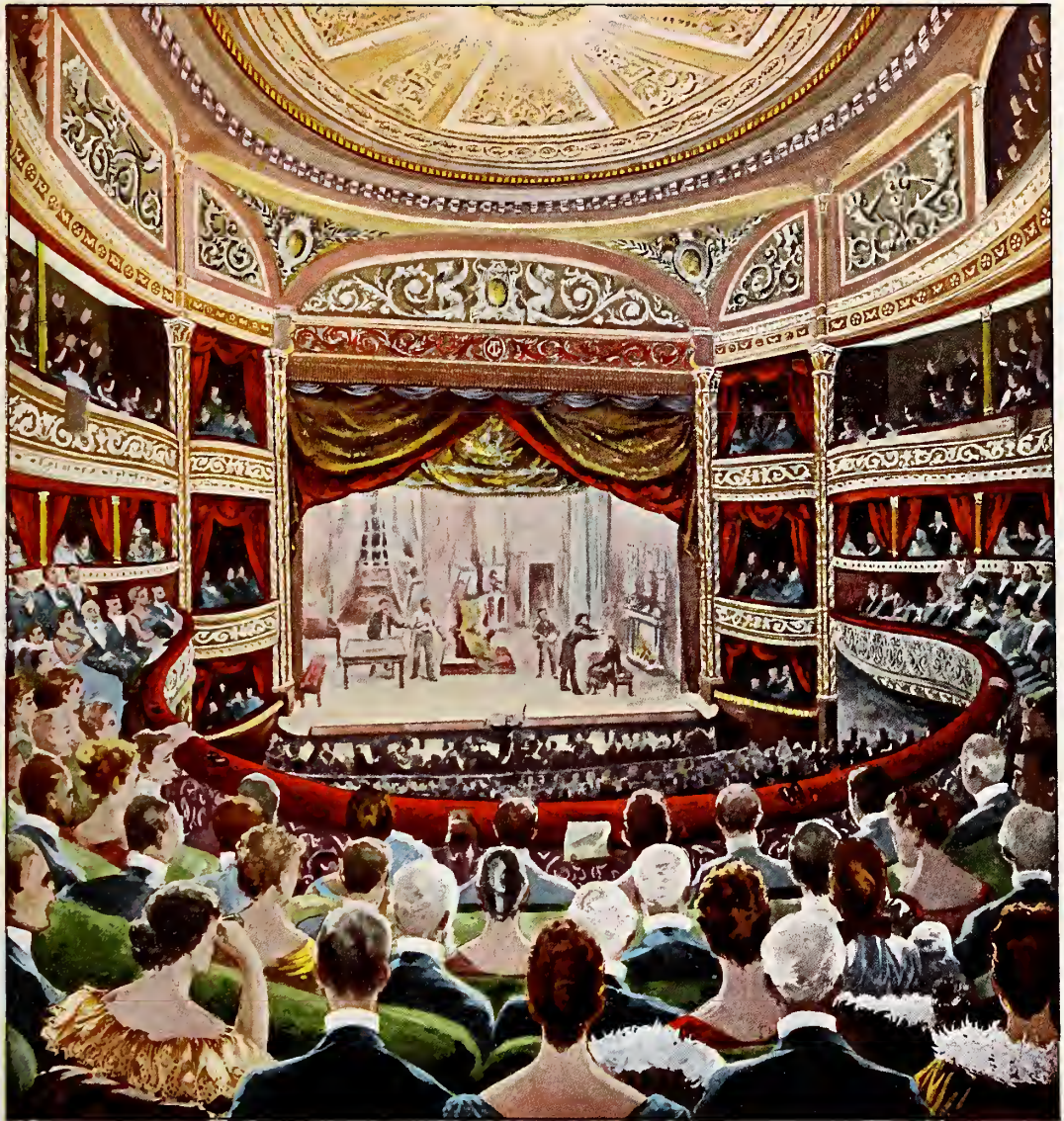
1871.

With Michael Gunn's
27TH NOV 1896. Compts





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• GAIETY THEATRE, DUBLIN •





✧ MRS. MICHAEL GUNN ✧



ADDRESS

ON THE

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING

OF THE

GAIETY THEATRE, DUBLIN,

SATURDAY, 28th NOVEMBER, 1896;

WRITTEN BY

EDWIN HAMILTON, ESQ., M.A., M.R.I.A.

THE PLAY was called "The Nineteenth Century";
Its years had been presented—all but three.

The Stage was "All the World"; the boards, though strong,
Could scarce sustain the ever-growing throng.

Three Acts, of twenty-five years each, had gone;
And now the fourth and final Act was on.

Old FATHER TIME was in the prompter's chair;
And, book in hand, surveyed the stage from there.

"How late it gets," he murmured with a frown,

"It's nearly time to ring the curtain down."

The call-boy craned his neck to watch the Scene,
And whispered, "Say, what does this Drama mean?"

"It means," said TIME—his eye still on the stage—

"That record-breaking now is all the rage.

"They value time, of that I don't complain,

"But all this hurry-scurry turns my brain.

"Contrast the old photography and new:—

"'Quite steady, please; look pleasant; that will do.'

"Just thirty seconds; then the artist's work
 "Immortalised your most engaging smirk.
 "The snap-shot fiend now aims without remorse,
 "And 'click!' he's got you, at your worst, of course.
 "Thanks to X rays, the time will come no doubt
 "When he will snappograph you wrong side out."

"ACT 1.—Six people in a coach are packed;
 "Then 'puffing Billy' marks the second Act.
 "The third Act comes, and railways net the map.
 "The fourth shows lightning harnessed to the trap.
 "Sedan chairs yielded to the chair of Bath;
 "Next, infants' 'prams,' monopolised the path;
 "And now the ladies (whom I fain would bless)
 "They bike, they scorch in bifurcated dress.
 "And ere the curtain falls—you mark my words—
 "You'll see them flying like the dicky-birds."

"TALKING," said TIME, "of records, it appears,
 "That for the space of five-and-twenty years—
 "A quarter of a century, you see,
 "Which constitutes a Silver Jubilee—
 "A spot called Dublin has maintained a 'show,'
 "With more success than any place I know.
 "That Temple of the Drama has been run
 "By certain people of the name of GUNN.
 "Theirs is a record pretty hard to beat—
 "A thousand victories and no defeat."

HERE TIME a sigh of satisfaction drew;
 Then smiled benignly and began anew:—
 "While other entertainments waxed and waned,
 "Dramatic Art first favourite remained,
 "Above golf, tennis, croquet, rinking, polo,

"Chess, drafts and whist (both partnership and solo);
 "The serpent-boy, the human chimpanzee
 "Contort and climb, for fame and £ s. d.;
 "Performers void of acrobatic skill
 "Invent new ways to make a person ill.
 "One walks for weeks, or stands upon his head
 "For months, or swallows tacks, or molten lead,
 "Or starves—in business hours—to win renown.
 "Balloons go up and parachutes come down;
 "The Switchback jolts its screaming freight along,
 "Great wheels go round—unless there's something wrong.
 "But, spite of all the bliss these pleasures bring,
 "As Shakespeare once remarked, 'The Play's the thing.' "

"THE PLAY's the thing to cancel time and space,
 "To link together all the human race;
 "To bring down pride, exalt the lowly-born,
 "Encourage virtue, hold up vice to scorn.
 "Vainglory, hence! ye Centuries, avaunt!
 "Yes: 'Julius Cæsar' follows 'Charley's Aunt.' "

* * * *

TIME yawned, was silent, seemed but half awake.
 And now I have a few remarks to make:—
 Here has it been your lot for many a year
 To laugh with *Lumpkin* and lament with *Lear*.
 Here Opera, grand and light, has given cause
 For kind, discreet, most musical applause.
 No School of Drama has been here ignored,
 No healthful territory unexplored—
 Except those touching scenes of private life
 In which one "Punch" admonishes his wife.

TIME comes eventually, soon or late,
 When friends, however true, must separate.

But, thanks to science, we no longer go
 "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow."
 Name any place, it seems almost next door—
 Hey, presto, pass! and back you are once more.
 All we who've lived in Dublin learn the knack
 Of looking forward to our coming back.

Not many brows the laurel wreath may grace,
 That envied leaf has many storms to face.
 It lives, though languishing; it even tries
 To deem the gale a blessing in disguise.
 Though just at first it fails, perhaps, to bless
 A warm sirocco from the Daily Press,
 Some Weekly hailstones, big, but far between,
 Belated lightning from the Magazine.
 Unless, however, you decree a "frost,"
 The shrub's vitality is far from lost.
 Here has it flourished five-and-twenty years,
 Your smiles for sunshine and for rain your tears;
 Renew its lease of life; yes, you comply:
 Farewell, best Friends, ten thousand thanks. Good-bye.





SCENE FROM "SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER,"

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THE DUBLIN PUBLIC AND THE STAGE.



BY M. B.

A SHADOW of regret inevitably falls upon the mirthfulness of to-night's commemoration, for it is not only a commemoration, but a farewell. The management of the Gaiety Theatre, that we have seen so long conducted by Mr. Michael Gunn with such exuberant vitality and such brilliant success, passes into other hands. The training and the traditions, of which the new manager is the heir, give good warranty that the current of its success will still flow bright and unbroken. But even the well-grounded hopes of the future can hardly compensate for the delightful certainty of the past. The quarter of a century through which the Gaiety Theatre has now run its course has year by year rivetted, by a thousand pleasant reminiscences and associations, the bonds of personal friendship between Mr. Michael Gunn and the theatre-loving public of Dublin, and the rending of such ties cannot be accomplished without regret. For myself, I esteem it a privilege that I am permitted, as one of the most constant frequenters of the Theatre, and, I trust I may add, as one of the sincerest friends of its manager, here to voice without censorship the deep sorrow awakened by the tidings of his departure. Amid the crowd that throngs to-night those well-filled and familiar benches, for the last time under his management, with "thoughts looking before and after," it is only natural that retrospect should be more attractive than anticipation, for hopes have yet to be proved, and memories are wholly pleasurable.

Those amongst the audience whose remembrance stretches to the founding of the Gaiety (and in that list none will be compulsorily included), will remember the difficulties that clouded the enterprise in its inception. "The Royal" was then as the Gaiety is to-day, endeared to the heart of the people of Dublin by many pleasurable associations. The young rival of the old favourite had no easy task to accomplish. < The starting of the Gaiety Theatre was a distinct parting of the ways. The old-fashioned system of "the Stock Company" was discarded. In that abandonment many prejudices and predilections had to be displaced. The people, and especially the people of Dublin, love to see old friends on the stage. Very often it is more to the friend than to the actor the tribute of their applause is accorded. > But Mr. Gunn's ambition was to give to the public of Dublin, on the stage of his new Theatre, the best in variety and excellence that the world can afford. Looking round the Theatre to-night, after twenty-five years of efficient management, on the pleased faces of the patrons, who have gradually grown to be

friends, he can fairly pride himself on their verdict, that the high ambition with which he started has been fully realized.

Let no one lightly underrate the part a well-managed Theatre plays, not in the recreation merely, but in the education of a city. Dramatic entertainments are no mere artificial excrescence of society; no creation of caprice; no product of a changing phase of fashion. The love of the drama is inherent in human nature. It is wide as the world, as long-enduring as the centuries. Children are instinctively actors almost from the cradle. In the "make-believe" plays of the little ones the dramatic instinct asserts itself, almost as soon as they can speak or walk. Many mature actors might with advantage take a lesson from the earnestness and self-absorption of those miniature performers of the nursery. The love of the drama grows with one's growth, the grandchild and the grandfather participate in the delight of the stage. It is one of the few enjoyments that satiety cannot kill, "as if increase of appetite had grown from what it feeds on." The rapture of the novice, who tastes for the first time the pleasure of the play, is less to be envied than the keen, critical enjoyment of the veteran, who never misses a first night.

As it is now, so it has always been. Looking back through the dim ages, when history blends with the twilight of fable, we catch a glimpse of the theatre, then as now the centre of recreation, of instruction, of culture, not in the languid lily and sunflower sense of the term, but of that culture by which the soul strengthens and expands. The masterpieces of literature in every language have come to mankind as gifts from the stage. The works of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, in the very infancy of literature, can hardly be rivalled by its maturity. The Intermediate schoolboy's views on the subject are, perhaps, prejudiced. But the works of those great masters are the theme of impartial and unbounded admiration to those who have mastered the Greek language and those who have never attempted it at all. It were an easy task to show how the genius of every age and country has brightened the stage; but it is only needed to point to the culminating glory of Shakespeare. Even in our own times, if such masterpieces are no longer created, the public, if less discriminating, is more generous than ever to the popular dramatist. There is room for everybody. The gifted author of "Charley's Aunt" has made more by his masterpiece than all the combined earnings of the dramatists of the Elizabethan era, with Shakespeare at their head. Dramatic success is still the blue-ribbon of literary competition in the matter of pence and praise.

In one thing at least we may boast ourselves better than our fathers. We have realized the utility and the dignity of the stage. Old-fashioned prejudices die slowly, but they are nearly dead. The "play-house" and the play-actor are no longer terms of reproach. The high mission of the stage is realized, and the actor's art is recognized and respected as are the painter's and the poet's.

It is bare justice to the Gaiety Theatre to say that from the night on which it was opened it held its place with the best in the United Kingdom. Custom dulls appreciation, and we find it hard to realize how large a part it played and plays in the social life of our Metropolis. Let those who crowd its benches to-night realize if they can how often it has rescued them from the martyrdom of *ennui*, for how many hours of innocent and intellectual enjoyment they are indebted to the Gaiety. In the world of music and of the drama, it gave its patrons of the best. Through the long term of Mr. Gunn's management there was no great work and no great artist denied to the appreciative eyes and ears of the patrons of the Gaiety. Its patrons are of all ranks, and of all ages, and are catered for with impartial kindness. At Christmas time, when the drama flings aside decorum and romps with the youngsters, the Gaiety revelled in it with the best. It has been famous for its pantomimes since that most delightful of tyrants, King Turko the Terrible, who first won for the Gaiety the constant and invaluable allegiance of the young. To how many amongst us to-night does that name recall some of the jolliest hours of our lives.

The drama was not always preaching from the boards of the Gaiety; it romped and laughed and sang, brightening the work-a-day lives of laborious citizens, who look to the Theatre for enjoyment. But none the less, the high mission of the stage was not neglected or forgotten—"Whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

What a goodly procession they would make, the great masters in music and the drama, that have in their days or nights figured on the boards of the Gaiety. It was not enough to give the patrons of the Gaiety the successes and the sensations of each succeeding season. From the full treasure-houses of the past were drawn the unrivalled masterpieces, to which Irish genius has so largely contributed. These masterpieces found full and fitting embodiment on the stage of the Gaiety—

There Shakespeare's men and women lived again,
E'en as creative genius first conceived them.
There lightly laugh'd the wit of Sheridan,
And gentler Goldsmith's genial humour smiled.

The actors were worthy of the plays. The most exalted experience that the stage affords is Hamlet worthily performed. Sullivan, Irving, Booth, Benson, and Tree have in turn delighted audiences at the Gaiety by their impersonation of this highest conception of human genius, and have armed the old age of its patrons with standards of contemptuous comparison with the actors of the future.

Reminiscences are tempting and tedious. The great picture-gallery of pleasant nights spent at the Gaiety is still fresh in our memories, and must move us to-night to appreciation and gratitude to him by whose judicious zeal they were so lavishly provided, and to regret that the hour of parting is at hand. For the new management, all the friends of the Gaiety can only wish that it may emulate the triumphs of the past. No better wish is possible in the interest of the Theatre or the interest of the public.





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A HISTORICAL RETROSPECT



BY J. B. H.



NIGHT of the 27th November, 1871, of which the silver jubilee is celebrated on the present occasion, must ever be a historic date in the annals of the Dublin stage. It was upon that eventful night that the Gaiety Theatre was opened to the public amidst a scene of almost unparalled interest. The famous old "Royal" in Hawkin's-street was still in existence, but there was a universal feeling that despite the traditional glories that surrounded the name

and fame of that scene of so many dramatic triumphs, a new Theatre, built and equipped upon more modern lines, was necessary to place the second city of the empire upon a footing equal to some at least of the important Theatrical centres in England. And so Messrs. John and Michael Gunn placed the work of constructing the Gaiety in the hands of Mr. C. J. Phipps, F.S.A., then, perhaps, the most eminent architect to whom such a task could be committed.

Within the almost incredibly short period of six months and a fortnight from the laying of the first stone, the King-street house was completed, and completed in a way that not only surprised people, but won from everyone capable of forming an opinion, the most unbounded admiration. A great deal had been written about the interior of the new Theatre, but every prediction fell short of the realization, for the internal beauties of such a building can only be properly judged when it is lit up, and filled by an audience as crowded and distinguished as that which assembled to inaugurate what has proved to be one of the most charming temples dedicated to the drama that has been erected in the Three Kingdoms. Those who were present on that opening night cannot readily forget the impression the scene created. A vast audience thronged every section of the auditorium. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were present; each profession was represented by its most distinguished ornaments; the "youth, wealth and beauty" of

the capital were there, whilst pit and gallery contained those who are the back-bone of all true audiences—those who are most

“Acute as critics, and as censors fair.”

The play was appropriately enough, “*She Stoops to Conquer*,” followed by the burlesque of “*La Belle Sauvage*,” performed by Mrs. John Wood’s Company. The veteran leader, Mr. John Liddel, conducted the orchestra. Before the performance was proceeded with, Mrs. Scott Siddons—a name to conjure with—who had graciously offered her services, delivered in sweet and silvery accents, an admirable address from the pen of the late Dr. John Francis Waller. The opening stanza will bear quotation, and has a special appropriateness even now:—

Scarce hath the earth her journey half way run,
In changing seasons round the central sun—
Since Art, obedient to the Muse’s call,
Laid the foundation of this Thespian Hall.
Then day by day, in fair proportions grew,
The beauteous fabric that now meets the view.
The graceful shafts with floral sculpture crowned,
Supporting tier on tier that rises round,
With many a rich device by genius planned,
Wrought by the painter’s brush, the carver’s hand.
’Till amid gleaming gold and flooding light—
Resplendent shines “*The Gaiety*” to-night.

The performance that night was itself historic, for it was, perhaps, the finest representation possible of Goldsmith’s immortal comedy. Mr. Lionel Brough, who is still, as we all rejoice, the heartiest and liveliest of “*Lairds*,” was the “*Tony Lumpkin*,” and in the burlesque, “*La Belle Sauvage*,” which Mrs. John Wood had made so famous, he played “*Captain John Smyth*,” whilst she herself appeared as the “*Princess Pocahontas*.” It is unnecessary, however, to dwell upon the perfection of the production or upon the scene of enthusiasm which prevailed, further than to say that, as might have been expected, Mr. John Gunn and Mr. Michael Gunn were loudly called for, and amidst the vociferous plaudits of a great house bowed their acknowledgements for the cries of congratulation and goodwill which greeted their appearance on the stage.

It was, therefore, under circumstances of rare and special gratification that the new Theatre opened upon its career of greatness. And how have the predictions of success, the wishes for its prosperity, expressed in all the public journals of the day, been fulfilled? A glance at the long

roll of important engagements, and at the oft-repeated records of triumphant progress and great performances, will afford the surest proof. From the very start the companies engaged included the best that it was possible for enterprise and good judgment to secure. John Hollingshead's famous Gaiety Company, with "La Grande Duchesse" (soon, we believe, to be revived); "La Belle Helene" and "The Brigands"; Rose Hersée's English Opera Company; the famous "Caste" Company; the Blanche Cole Opera Company; Madame Celeste; poor H. J. Montague, the "most finished gentleman on the stage." The early portion of the season 1872 was signalized by the production of "Amy Robsart," a most entertaining burlesque, played by Eldred's Company. In it the great feature was the wonderfully vivacious and charming performance of Miss Angelina Claude as Walter Raleigh. No burlesque actress of our time has surpassed this delightful artist, who, up to the time of her retirement from the stage, was in the very forefront of popularity; her gifts and graces being of the highest order. Mr. "Teddy" Royce, too, as Varney, produced a great impression. His song "Invisibility" is still remembered. It was to the striking success he achieved in this part that he owed the special engagement to fill the title part in the pantomime of the year following. Italian Opera, with Bettini and Corrani, were amongst the attractions of the first couple of years, and in Dec., '73, we had what proved to be one of the best pantomimes ever put upon the Dublin stage, namely, "Turko the Terrible," the book of which, by Edwin Hamilton, made its name and fame live ever green in the memories of those who had the privilege of seeing it. Who can forget Ted Royce's inimitable performance, his quaint humour, his unmatched skill as a dancer? A word will afterwards be said of the period of evolution through which old-fashioned pantomime has gone under the Gaiety administration.

Hermann Vezin (still an evergreen, who yet holds his own on the London boards), the late Charles Matthews, and a stock company, and other fine actors, appeared in 1874; and towards the close of that year, George Thorne, who has since become famous in the Sullivan and Gilbert Combination, appeared in "Blow for Blow," and "Stage Struck." In 1875, we had the Pantomime of "Cinderella," with Robson, son of *the* famous Robson, in one of the chief parts, and on March, 29th, the Carl Rosa Opera Company appeared in this Theatre for the first time, and thus inaugurated a series of seasons than which there have been no more marked successes in the record of the Irish stage. Charles Wyndham, Mrs. John Wood's Company, Miss Genevieve Ward, and the Chippendale Company, came afterwards. It may be new to many to learn that Genevieve Ward's first appearance was as a vocalist in "I Puritani," under the name of "Guerabella."

In July, 1876, we meet the D'Oyly Carte "Opera Bouffe Company"—as it then was called—who performed "The Duke's Daughter" and "Trial by Jury." How suggestive is that simple line—how comparatively short the time has been, and yet what marvels of artistic work

followed in quick succession from those "Siamese twins of satire and song," as Sullivan and Gilbert have not inaptly been called. Then who does not remember the delight which Duck's great "Our Boys'" Company was wont to give? It was in October, 1876, that J. L. Toole, who so far back as 1852 made his first appearance at the Queen's, Dublin, entered into a new lease of theatrical life, by appearing at the Gaiety in the "Steeplechase," in which piece, for about the thousandth time, he was seen in the inevitable "pigskin." It was in October, 1876, that Jefferson first electrified the Gaiety audience by his never-to-be-forgotten performance of "Rip Van Winkle." The greeting he met with on that opening night moved him greatly by its enthusiasm, and it was indeed several minutes before his voice could find utterance. Some months afterwards Edward Terry made his bow, and secured an affection in the estimation of Dublin people that has grown greater with every visit. It was in April, 1877, that he opened a season, playing "Weak Woman," "Little Don Caesar," "Paul Pry," and the "Rival Othellos." In May following, the late Henry J. Byron appeared—and, alas! for the last time—in "Not such a Fool as he Looks" and "Delicate Ground."

The next visit of the Carl Rosa Company was in August following, when the Company included Fred Packard and poor Julia Gaylord, whose name still shines brightly in the minds of all lovers of true melody and of great artistic worth. Ludwig was also in the Company, and the season was made memorable by his extraordinary and unsurpassed performance of "Vanderdecken" in the "Flying Dutchman," with which his name has since become so inseparably identified. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, who had even then been long amongst the prime favourites of Dublin, appeared in "The Scrap of Paper," in November, 1877, and in the same month Miss Neilson, as "Juliet," "The Lady of Lyons," and "Rosalind," left an impression which no actress has surpassed in our day.

It was in this year, in April, that Mr. John Gunn died, and this event, which caused a deep feeling of sympathy in the city, threw the sole responsibility of the administration of the Theatre on his brother, Mr. Michael Gunn. In July, 1878, we had a visit from the—by this time greatly enhanced—D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, with "The Sorcerer," and Mr. Ryley as "John Wellington Wells." Its success was instantaneous, and its airs were whistled in the street for many a long day after. In the following season they played "Pinafore," which proved, perhaps, the most successful of all the series.

The season of the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1879 was mainly remarkable for the production, for the first time, of "Piccolino," by Guirard. It is interesting to recall the fact that Carl Rosa practically proved the faith he professed in the judgment of the Dublin people, by producing in our city works thus introduced for the first time to a British audience. "Mignon" first saw the

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SIGNOR FOLI



MR. JOSEPH MAAS



M^{LE} ZÉLIE DE LUSSAN



MR. BARTON MCGUCKIN



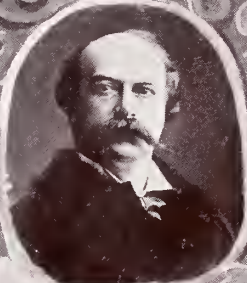
M^{ME} MARIE ROSE



MISS MINNIE HAUCK



M^{ME} SCALCHI



SIGNOR SALVINI



MISS JULIA GAYLORD



MISS FANNY MOODY



M^{ME} NORDICA



MISS ELLA RUSSELL



M^{LE} A. TREBELLI



SIGNOR DEL PUENTE

light in an English garb in Dublin, and received the verdict of satisfaction, which has been confirmed from that day to this. The experiment in the case of "Piccolino" was not so satisfactory, for although the performance was a fine one, and the cost of putting the opera on the stage very considerable, it soon dropped out of the repertory. Those who were present on the first night of its production will not forget the great humour and ability of Mr. Charles Lyall, whose marvellous skill as a draughtsman and caricaturist was exemplified with great effect in the studio scene. The singing of Georgina Burns, Miss Gaylord, Mr. Packard, Miss Yorke, and Mr. Crotty went a great way towards making the opera acceptable. Many will remember the great night when Julia Gaylord, having created the part of "Mignon," received the almost unprecedented honour of being recalled five or six times at the close of a scene in that opera, when a spontaneous shower of bouquets was thrown at the feet of that delightful artist. That was the occasion when a curious episode occurred unnoticed by the audience, known, in fact, but to a very few. Mr. Bettjeman was then stage manager for the Company. He has since become a conductor of eminence, and has filled the place of orchestral leader of Her Majesty's Opera. In the scene where poor Mignon dances the egg-dance to the music of the strolling fiddler, the strolling fiddler was Bettjeman. Mention of "Mignon" would be incomplete and unfair that did not record the marvellous singing of Georgina Burns, as "Filina," and of the late Mr. Joseph Maas, as "Wilhelm." No English tenor of our day has surpassed the latter in vocal purity and power.

Passing by many memorable engagements, one comes to that event which marked an epoch in the history of the Gaiety, namely, the lamentable burning of "The Old Royal." It was upon Monday, the 10th of February, 1880, that that tragic event took place, for it was rendered tragic by the loss of Mr. Egerton, the manager. No disaster that had occurred before in Dublin caused such widespread feeling, and the sympathy extended universally to Mr. Michael Gunn was rendered all the keener for the reflection that the last service of the grand old house was to have been in the cause of charity, for Mr. Gunn and all his staff and artists had most generously given their services on that day in aid of the poor of Dublin. It was to have been a day performance, and at 2 o'clock the curtain was to have been raised upon the Pantomime of "Ali Baba," the proceeds to be devoted to the Dublin Charities Fund. But, alas, it was not to be, and in a few short hours a heap of smouldering ashes was all that remained of a once noble building. One of the Dublin papers, speaking of Mr. Gunn's great loss, wrote:—"To him all Dublin turns in sympathy to-day. Words are all too weak, to say how terrible must have been the shock to him, to learn of the destruction of a Theatre with whose fortunes he had so entwined himself, and, worse than all, to know that his most able friend, adviser, and faithful servant, Francis Egerton, had perished in the ruins, dying in a noble act of bravery and duty."

The destruction of the Royal, of course, placed upon the management of the Gaiety an onerous task. It was their duty now to supply Dublin with an adequate substitute for the loss of the old Theatre. And from that day to this the effort to secure that result has been unsparing. It is not in mortals to command success, and there are some cavillers whom no enterprise will satisfy, no exertion move to recognition, no success convince. But what has been the record? During those sixteen years no great play that the London stage has brought to light has been denied to Dublin; the name of no actor of eminence is to be missed from the roll of engagements; no new opera or musical work has been left long without being introduced to our audiences, and, with the growth of the times, the means and methods of stage production adopted have been commensurate with the importance of the works presented. No impartial visitor to our city has failed to be impressed by the unceasing and most successful effort to keep the Theatre in the front rank, and equal, if not superior, to the best of its many English rivals. Every new appliance that science or ingenuity could devise has been employed to make more perfect the internal equipment of the house. Thousands of pounds have been expended upon making it what it unquestionably can boast to be to-day, one of the best-appointed and most comfortable Theatres in the kingdom. The auditorium has undergone a beautifying process, which has involved a lavish outlay. The scenic department of the stage presents what to an artist must be of special interest, namely, an unvarying picture of the very best class of work which any Theatre can claim to possess. A permanent orchestra of trained musicians, under a most capable conductor, affords no cause for any carping criticism, and affairs before the curtain, so far as management, unvarying courtesy, and general administration are concerned, have, it will be acknowledged, won the honest recognition of citizens and visitors of all classes.

Of the progress of the Theatre as the central home of the Drama in Ireland, it can at least be said that no similar establishment, either in or outside of London, can point to a better record. It has been an epitome of the history of modern dramatic efforts and representations. Here have come the splendid masters of the tragic muse, Edwin Booth, Salvini, Barry Sullivan, Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, F. R. Benson, Wilson Barrett, Osmond Tearle. We have had the majestic Bernhardt and Ristori, the beauteous Mary Anderson, Miss Ellen Terry, Genevieve Ward, Mdme. Modjeska, the famous Polish actress, Miss Wallis, and a host of others. On these boards, too, the most famous votaries of the comic muse have appeared, Matthews, Edward Terry, Lionel Brough, J. L. Toole, Edward Compton, Arthur Roberts, Fred Leslie, Willie Edouin, etc. The Queens of the lyric stage have been within its walls—Nordica, Minnie Hauk, Lablache, Ella Russell, Valleria, Scalchi, Zelie de Lussan, Georgina Burns, Gaylord, Marie Roze, and their male compeers—Ravelli, Foli, De Anna, Ciampi, Del Puente, Abramoff, Runcio, Frapolli, Joseph Maas, Ludwig, and, later still, M'Guckin, Crotty, John Child, Alec Marsh, Hedmond, and Brozel. Of

conductors, the names will occur of Arditì, Carl Rosa (himself a prince of the baton) Goosns, Jacquinet, and Eckhold.

It is interesting to recall the fact that as far back as October, 1879, Alexander Henderson's Company appeared in Offenbach's "Madame Favart"—interesting chiefly because on that occasion Mr. Beerbohm Tree, now in the very front rank of his profession, filled the part of the "Marquis de Pont Sable, Military Governor under Marshal Saxe." In October, 1880, Miss Ellen Terry played "Portia" to the "Shylock" of the late Mr. Charles Kelly, and in the December following Barry Sullivan, who was always lionized in Dublin, once again performed his round of familiar characters, of which the most effective, perhaps, was "The Stranger."

In 1880-'81 the Pantomime of "Robinson Crusoe" was presented, and here, perhaps, it may be appropriate to say that in the preparation of these pieces, and in their method of performance, a great change had developed. It is true that in the old days a vast amount of outlay was devoted to elaborately modelled masks, sometimes to colossal spectacular effects, and to the mechanical changes incidental to the Harlequinade. But as time went on, the more grotesque forms of humour were supplanted by scenes and episodes that met more perfectly the changing fashion of the day. People had grown more critical, and even young people had become more exacting, not to say more sceptical. And so a different class of work had to be provided. For years past Pantomime has engaged the attention of the local scenic artist and his staff during many long months before the eventful Boxing Night, and an army of artificers are employed in King-street working out the countless details the preparations involve. Mrs. Michael Gunn, as all Dublin knows, has each year devoted herself with untiring zeal to securing the approval of Pantomime audiences by the perfection of the department, which she has controlled with such rare advantage, namely, the artistic designing and selection of the costumes for the great stage groups and pageants, which have formed a main feature of the Christmas pieces. And in this work—to her an obvious labour of love—she has not only enhanced beyond measure the beauty of these wonderfully perfect Pantomimes, but she has been the means of giving lucrative employment to hundreds of humble Dublin girls, engaged by her as seamstresses, etc., in the production of the costumes. Artists of eminence in their respective lines have had to be engaged, and special features added as the seasons progressed. The application of the electric light, too, and its utilization in so many ingenious forms became an invaluable characteristic, which our fathers would indeed have marvelled to see. And so the great Pantomimes, especially of "Robinson Crusoe," "Dick Whittington," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sindbad the Sailor," "Cinderella," have been the object of universal praise, and unstinted recognition has been extended to the enormous cost, labour and anxiety expended upon those and similar works.

In June, 1881, one of the most important engagements in the history of the Theatre took place,

namely, that of Sarah Bernhardt, and it was one during which the capacity of the Gaiety was taxed to its very utmost. The great actress appeared in "La Dame aux Camélias" and "Frou Frou." Her reception was extraordinarily enthusiastic. The gallery boys were in an especial manner demonstrative, their cheers on her appearance being so prolonged as to cause her to gaze up at them with a curious expression of bewilderment and appeal. In "Frou Frou" she exercised the most potent sway over her audience, who had never seen, and never could see again, perhaps, upon the stage such a terribly realistic enactment of the moment of final dissolution—the passage from life to death—as when, expiring in the last dread scene, she murmured, "*pauvre Frou Frou*."

In this year we had the Carl Rosa Company, who produced two works, which, however interesting and finished in performance, failed to find a fixed place in their repertory—one was "I Promessi Sposi," by Ponchielli, and the other "The Cadi," by Ambroise Thomas. "Zampa" was also done, and in it Mr. Leslie Crotty greatly distinguished himself in the title rôle. In the following year they produced "Moro" and the "Merry Wives of Windsor." Towards the close of 1881, Mr. Henry Irving and Miss Terry played for a week, during which they appeared in "The Bells," the "Belle's Stratagem," "Charles I.," and Tennyson's play, "The Cup." In the first-named piece, Mr. Irving exercised all his wonted and almost magical effect upon his hearers. The contrast between "Matthias" and "Dorincourt" in Mrs. Crowley's old-fashioned comedy is as wide as the poles apart, and Mr. Irving displayed astonishing versatility, but, of course, the experience was made more memorable by Miss Terry's acting as "Letitia Hardy." People nowadays could hardly realize how beautifully, nay, how irresistibly in this character she sang "Where are you going to my pretty Maid." It completely fascinated her audience. "The Cup" did not prove a striking success in Dublin, and has not been repeated. A very interesting engagement of the famous Chippendale Comedy Company afforded a rare opportunity of witnessing the fine old plays included in their repertory, in which they were really inimitable. It is pleasant to recall the fact that during this year (1881), amongst the best performances given of "The School for Scandal," and "She Stoops to Conquer," were these in which the important parts of Lady Teazle and Miss Harcastle were played by Mrs. Michael Gunn. In both she was surpassingly good, and enthusiastically applauded. She possessed just the qualifications essential—a graceful and fascinating appearance, a joyous laugh and look, and a thoroughly artistic self-identification with the characters. She, moreover, had the great advantage of being associated in these two plays with the late Mr. Granby, whose Sir Peter and old Harcastle have never been surpassed by any actor. He had been a member of the Stock Company of the old Royal, and was a great favourite with all playgoers who could appreciate the work of a sterling artist of the best school. Mr. Herbert Jenner played Joseph Surface and Young Marlow, so that the caste throughout was very complete.

For November Mr. Gunn secured an engagement with the great Polish actress, Modjeska, who played "Mary Stuart," "Heartsease," and "Adrienne Lecouvreur." Her chief triumph was in the first-named play—her queenly dignity and self-identification with the part being her most marked characteristics. On this occasion it is interesting to note that Mr. Forbes Robertson appeared as the "Earl of Leicester," and was deservedly spoken of as "sharing the triumphs of Modjeska"—a high tribute of praise to so young an actor, and one which he has since fully justified.

Among the chief engagements of 1882 was that of Miss Kate Bateman (Mrs. Crowe), the original "Leah," who played once more that great part in which she had achieved such world-wide fame, and also "Medea" and "Mary Warner." A great treat was afforded Dublin audiences by the appearance, in Sept., 1882, of Ristori, as "Elizabeth" and "Lady Macbeth." Her marvellous powers seemed in no way diminished by weight of years, and every part she played proved a great dramatic achievement; her gestures being particularly picturesque, descriptive, and true to nature. Later on there was the interesting engagement of Miss Genevieve Ward, in "Forget Me Not." Meanwhile Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore, and subsequently Edward Terry, had delighted crowded audiences, the latter convulsing everyone by his performance in the burlesque of "The Forty Thieves."

One of the most memorable engagements that ever took place in the Gaiety Theatre, or, for the matter of that, in the three kingdoms, was that of Edwin Booth, who appeared the week commencing November 6th, 1882. His performances created a profound impression. He appeared as "Macbeth," "Richard III," and "Lear," and in "The Fool's Revenge." It was in "Lear" that, perhaps, his transcendent genius was made most manifest. The effect of the last scene has never been surpassed in the history of dramatic work. One of the Dublin newspapers thus alluded to it—"The tears that fell from men and women who witnessed that scene, the hushed and reverential silence that marked the closing words, the melting, heart-touching pathos that unmanned even the actors, formed a testimony to the genius of Mr. Booth greater than any expression of words can convey."

Later on came the Kendals, who were accompanied by Mr. Hare, and played "The Squire," "The Queen's Shilling," "Scrap of Paper," and the "Lady of Lyons." Mr. Hare was exceptionally good as "Colonel Damas" in the last named. The Pantomime this year was "Little Red Riding Hood," memorable for the wonderful electric light effects, produced for the first time, in the "Glow Worm Glen" scene, and also for the particularly pretty performance of a clever child as the heroine, Effie Mason, who had already made a name by her playing as "Little Buttercup" in the "Children's Pinafore" some months before.

In March, 1883, we had the Sullivan and Gilbert Combination with "Iolanthe," and in due



course the ever-welcome Carl Rosa Company, who gave, amongst other works, "Fidelio" and "Favorita"—in which Marie Roze appeared—also "Lucrezia" and "Colombo" and "Esmeralda." In "Lucrezia" Mr Ludwig received a great greeting as the "Duke," and Miss Josephine Yorke was an exceptionally good "Orsini." Miss Wallis was always a great favourite, and in September she filled a very successful engagement, playing in "Romeo and Juliet," "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," and "Adrienne." Later in the year Florence St. John appeared in "Lucette," and as "Boulotte" in "Barbe Bleu"; and again Ristori acted towards the close of the year. Amongst the most successful engagements that immediately followed were those of the Vokes Family, nearly all the members of which have, alas! passed away, and Kyrle Bellew, dashing, picturesque, and handsome in "Ruy Blas." "Sindbad the Sailor" was the Pantomime of that year.

In April, 1884, "Princess Ida" was performed, and was greatly appreciated. "Patience" had already taken the town by storm, and it is questionable if its popularity was exceeded by any of its fellows, save, perhaps, "The Mikado," which later on afforded still another instance of the inexhaustible powers of its wonderful authors. On May 12th, the great Italian actor, Tommaso Salvini, who had previously played in the old Royal, astonished and, in a sense, bewitched the Gaiety audiences by his perfectly unique and unmatched performances of "Othello" and the "Gladiator." Those who have not seen this great actor cannot conceive how strangely irresistible was the dramatic power he possessed, or realize his most sublime genius, the spontaneity of correct effect, and the marvellous idealization of self, which enabled the great Italian to achieve his superb successes. His "Othello" was the despair of the critics. It was beyond praise. It baffled analysis. Pathos was its keynote, and the man or woman must have been more or less than human who could without emotion see that noble personage—a very prince amongst men—struggling with a giant force against an overwhelming conviction, his faith and love o'erthrown as by an earthquake. He revealed with consummate effect the loyal fiery nature of the Moor, the fierce conflict of insane pride, jealousy, and, as the climax came, of vengeance, in which the nobler qualities seem for a time completely extinguished. His "Othello" was not merely an embodiment of one furious passion, but a many-sided being, who compelled by turns one's admiration and pity, one's horror, and, again, one's aching sympathy. It was in truth a great creation, and one made additionally interesting by the playing of a gifted Italian actress, Signora Cattaneo, as "Desdemona," and of Signor Udina as "Iago."

On May 26th, Miss Mary Anderson made her bow to Dublin as "Parthenia" in "Ingomar," in "Galatea," and in "Comedy and Tragedy." It was as "Clarice" in the latter that her most unmistakable triumph was secured—a circumstance

all the more remarkable from the fact that this clever little sketch by W. S. Gilbert was given by way of an after-piece, and not by any means as *the* attraction of the night. She was supported by an excellent company, including Mr. William Rignold, formerly of the old Royal Stock Company, Mrs. Saker, Mr. Barnes, and subsequently by Mr. Forbes Robertson. The feature of the Carl Rosa Season in 1884 was the production of Boito's opera, "Mefistofele," which was magnificently performed, and put on the stage with a completeness and grandeur of detail worthy of any theatre in the three kingdoms. Madame Marie Roze was the "Marguerite," and subsequently "Helen," Mr. M'Guckin the "Faust," and Mr. Ludwig an absolutely incomparable "Mephistopheles." Never did our great Irish tenor, Mr. M'Guckin, of whose achievements Dublin has always been proud, secure so many triumphs as during this engagement. In November following, Miss Kate Vaughan appeared in "The Little Viscount" and the "Country Girl," and the Christmas piece was "Jack and the Beanstalk."

In 1885 T. W. Robertson's "Caste" Company, and Nellie Farren, and a number of interesting engagements filled the dates up to September, when the inimitable "Private Secretary" captured the town, with Helmore as the "Rev Robt. Spalding," and Hill, that "mountain of flesh," as "Cattermole." Then came Toole, and afterwards Wyndham, with Justin Huntley McCarthy's very clever piece, "The Candidate." Mrs. Langtry appeared subsequently in "Peril" and "She Stoops to Conquer"—her costumes being the wonder and envy of the ladies of Dublin society. In the Pantomime of "Dick Whittington" Mr. Richd. Purdon, a Dublin man and clever comedian, appeared. After the Pantomime an engagement was filled by Mr. Osmond Tearle, whose performances have given genuine pleasure in Dublin. His "Hamlet" was considered exceptionally good, if somewhat unduly robust. In March Miss Fortescue visited Dublin with "Gretchen" and "Frou Frou," and in April, 1886, the "Mikado" sent everyone home whistling or humming "The Flowers that Bloom in the Spring." Great as is the melody of the "Mikado," and wonderful the humour of the text, it is nevertheless true that to Mr. George Thorne and Mr. Fred Billington is due the credit of interpreting their parts in a way that gave the work its most irresistible element of attraction. Miss Jennie Lee appeared in May following as "Joe," followed by Augustus Harris's Company with "Human Nature," and in August by Miss Minnie Palmer and "My Sweetheart." In the August season the Carl Rosa Company produced "Nadeshda" and "The Beggar Student."

In September, 1886, we had a visit from Augustine Daly's delightful Company, including Ada Rehan. Immediately afterwards came Mr. Mapleson's Italian Opera Company. The Company included Mdme. Nordica, Mdme. Lablache, Mdle. Bauermeister, Signor Runcio, Signor Foli, Signor Del Puente, Signor Ciampi, and last, though assuredly not least, Signor Arditi, the composer of "Il Bacio," the greatest of operatic conductors,

whose name was ever one to conjure with in an orchestra; the associate of the mighty triumphs achieved by Mario, Giuglini, Santley, Titiens, Grisi, Di Murska, and a host of minor stars in the operatic firmament. How the audience cheered when his well-remembered face appeared—although, indeed, as he himself so often humorously said, it was the *back* of his head upon which he mainly depended for public recognition! And how proud the youthful veteran looked as he surveyed the mighty mass of faces before him! Many of those present had not been born when first he wielded the conductor's baton in our city, but all recognized in him a personality inseparably associated with the best traditions of Italian Opera. In October of the year following the Mapleson Company again filled an engagement, when the artists included Mdlle. Rolla, Madame Lablache, Signor Del Puente, Signor Carracciolo, Signor Rinaldini, Signor Vaschetti, and Signor De Anna, a bartone whose singing took Dublin by storm, his extraordinary power and range being quite phenomenal. Signor Arditi again conducted, and his appearance was greeted by the gods with the chorus of "For he's a jolly good fellow." During the engagement in "Il Barbiere," Mdlle. Rolla sang a charming Polka Cantabile by Arditi, "Fior di Marguerita." It is interesting to recall the fact that Arditi conceived and wrote the melody of "Il Bacio" in Dublin so far back as 1859.

In his recently published "Reminiscences," the famous conductor describes the occasion upon which he was presented with a baton in the Gaiety. He says:—"It was in October, on the night of the performance of 'Ernani,' when Mrs. Michael Gunn, in whose box my wife occupied a seat, called her attention to a spot in the gallery, where the Italian colours were suspended. Mrs. Gunn remarked, 'There is something up there for your husband,' to which my wife, who was very much mystified, said:—'Why, they are not going to throw it at him, are they?' At the end of the act, by means of a well-devised plan, a long case, tied up with red, green, and white ribbons, was slowly lowered in my direction, and was, much to my astonishment, presented to me amid great enthusiasm and applause; while with trembling fingers I undid the case, the gallery shouted, 'Speech, Arditi, speech.' All I could do was to recall in very few words my great appreciation of the many favours invariably shown me in Ireland, and I believe I was guilty of an Irishism, *entre autres*, in saying that 'my first appearance in England was in Dublin.' The baton presented was an ebony stick, mounted in gold, and studded with precious stones, and bears the following inscription:—"To Signor Luigi Arditi, from a few of his admirers in Dublin." Signor Arditi adds, that the Company then proceeded to Cork, and on their return his son, Gigi, fell ill with typhoid fever, and he was obliged to leave him in Dublin in charge of his wife. "For four weeks," adds Arditi, "she was kept a prisoner, when the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Gunn did much to alleviate her anxiety."

In October Nellie Farren and the Gaiety Company appeared for a week with "Little Jack

Sheppard," and this was followed by the last appearance of Barry Sullivan in Dublin. It was but a comparatively short time before his death, and the greatest sympathy was extended towards the hero of so many brilliant triumphs, for the signs and tokens of broken health and waning memory were but too visible. It was truly pathetic to follow at this time the old man's "Richelieu." His very feebleness, against which an indomitable spirit struggled, lent an almost awe-inspiring realism to his presentation of the great part which he had made so much his own. Around his grave at Glasnevin five years ago a vast concourse, including the members of the Gunn family, gathered at the final scene, and in this place may not inappropriately be quoted in his memory, and with one verbal alteration, the words applied to the great Garrick:—

The last sad rites were done—the sacred ground
Was closed, and Barry's dust to dust returned;
In life, in death, with general honours crowned,
A nation owned his worth—applauded, mourned.

Mrs. Bernard Beere made a great success in "Masks and Faces" in February, 1887, and in April, 1887, "Dorothy," one of the prettiest and most popular of light operas, from the Lyric Theatre, was performed, and was greatly appreciated.

Old-fashioned Italian Opera, properly so-called, had long become almost a thing of the past, and strange, perhaps, as it may appear, there are many left who still lament it. After all, who that has seen him can ever forget the operatic tenor of the old school? Some may even think conventional opera would be worth preserving, if only for the sake of his few survivors—the gentleman who so strangely and wonderfully used to work himself up to the point of delivering his famous chest C. One always knew when it was coming. Its owner would take a few strides towards the back of the stage, accumulating lung power the while, and then return to the footlights to expend it for the benefit of the audience and the glory of himself. And the orthodox Italian soprano of old! What, after all, would one do but for her occasional revisits to revive the memories of "Leonora"? Who does not recognize the *Scena*? All the other *personae* go out, and leave the lady to herself. She has all the stage to turn round in, and she turns round accordingly. There is the orchestral introduction, the lengthy recitative, and the prolonged monologue, relieved by the occasional kick at the elongated black train, and the by-play with the little lace handkerchief which she invariably carries. The latter was a possession without which the conventional operatic soprano could not apparently produce her effects. It was wont to be a sort of talisman, to be passed from one hand to the other, and occasionally pressed convulsively between

the two. And then she was always provided with a patient *confidante*, on whom she could conveniently lean in the intervals of her paroxysms. And, oh! the choristers of old! Probably no set of men or women were ever so single-minded. When Sheridan remarked upon the unanimity of the stage, he must have been thinking of these operatic supers. It was one of the joys of old-fashioned opera that the "crowds" were always agreed upon the course of action to be pursued. There were no half measures with them. If one went, all went; where one pointed, all pointed. Even when the exigencies of a cruel fate brought them forward in the guise of brigands or conspirators, they were always careful not to inconvenience anybody. When one of the principals was expected to arrive, they all formed themselves into line or group to receive him. Whether as Andalusian peasants, or high-born courtiers, their demeanour was just the same.

During the years whose history this article so inadequately sketches, all, or nearly all, of this has, however, undergone a great and remarkable change. To possess a good and trained voice has not been deemed sufficient to justify appearance in great opera, and season after season the public have grown to expect a more intimate association of the dramatic realization of a part with its due vocal interpretation. No one laboured to achieve this end more indefatigably than the late Carl Rosa, whose aim and object were to give the public the advantage of *ensembles* perfect in themselves, the resources not being unduly squandered upon "stars," but devoted to filling *all* the parts with competent artists, and making the band and chorus real and natural aids to the opera, and not merely noisy accompaniments. Nowhere more than in the Gaiety did his exertions find ungrudging and unceasing support from Press and public, and for his successes in our city he never omitted the opportunity of expressing his indebtedness to Mr. Gunn for the completeness with which the works he produced were put upon the stage. And so we all remember with delight the long list of splendid achievements accomplished year after year, the record of great musical works and the array of gifted vocalists who so worthily interpreted them. The orchestral department has each opera season been vastly increased, the rehearsals have been long and frequent, the best conductors chosen, and so far as the stage grouping, the choral work, the properties and accessories generally are concerned, these important matters have had devoted to them enormous outlay and unwearied attention at the hands of chorus-masters and stage directors. Imperfections may have been, and doubtless were occasionally to be noticed, and were not too sparingly dealt with, but the result was a redoubled effort to secure increased and absolute efficiency, and to win the approval of the public. No one will question the accuracy of the statement that that approval has been merited and manifested.

The very mention of a few of the works that, within the past eight or ten years, have found place in the repertory of the Carl Rosa Company, will recall how perfectly they have been performed. The "Puritan's Daughter," "Robert the Devil," "Cavalleria Rusticana," "L'Amico

Fritz," "Pagliacci," "Lohengrin," "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhauser," "The Meister Singers," Verdi's "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet," "Lucia," "Don Giovanni," Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel," etc., in addition, of course, to the old and never-to-be-omitted favourites of purely English opera, and not even forgetting the spoiled child of all, "The Bohemian Girl." In these every great artist of merit of our days has appeared, including many of foreign nationality, such as Marie Roze, De Lussan, the Ravoglias, Valleria, Abramoff, Brozel, Hedmond, Max Eugene, Homer Lind, etc., and those most admirable of conductors, Claud Jacquinet and Herr Eckhold.

It were needless to recount at any length the completeness with which these and the long list of English versions of Italian and other operas have been put forward, for the interest taken each succeeding opera season has been almost universal.

During the years that have passed there have been few incidents connected with the Gaiety more deserving of note than the visits of Sir Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry, for they have been all signalized by such performance of plays as cannot possibly have left the memory of those who witnessed them. Most remarkable of these may be mentioned "The Merchant of Venice," "Beckett," "Nance Oldfield," and "A Story of Waterloo." In these Mr. Irving secured his greatest triumphs. To the most eloquent expression of face, to the handwriting, as it were, of the passions upon his features, he added a judgment of rare accuracy, the result obviously of close and earnest study and mature observation. In the "Story of Waterloo" he gave a most startling and vivid picture of senility, and once more proved himself possessed of wonderful adaptability. As "Rosamond" in "Becket," and as "Portia," Miss Terry formed, however, the foremost figure. Her sweet sensibility swayed her hearers to tears or laughter, apparently without any effort. She has received from nature more of sensibility—which is the prime quality of acting—than Henry Irving, and does, apparently, from instinct what he achieves by art. Her method was simplicity itself. Her comedy was the dropping of the veil of conventionality—it was the absence of affectation, the assertion of womanly gentleness and sympathy. It was, moreover, a rare treat to enjoy the privilege of seeing and hearing plays so completely cast and put on the stage with such a wealth of appropriate and artistic equipment. Mr. Irving also produced Mr. W. G. Wills' adaptation of "Faust," but despite its most elaborate scenic attractions, and the earnestness with which it was performed, it was anything but a success. Three more wonderfully diverse characters than "Beckett," "Matthias" and the "Old Soldier" in "A Story of Waterloo" could not possibly be imagined, and there is no question about it, that Mr. Irving's interpretation of each stands out with bold and striking individuality. All the minor parts in each play presented were as perfectly filled as possible.

On the last occasion of his visit, he and Miss Terry were the recipients of a tribute of

admiration, in which the whole city may be said to have joined, for to the presentation which followed the address, delivered on the Gaiety stage in presence of a vast and distinguished gathering of citizens, all classes contributed. On the occasion referred to, Mr. Irving dwelt upon the great pleasure his visits to Dublin had given him, and the encouragement he and his colleagues had derived from the approval of our audiences, and he specially alluded to the gratification derived from appearing in a Theatre so worthy of the best traditions of the Dublin stage as the Gaiety.

The names of Arthur D'Acre and Amy Roselle recall the terribly touching and tragic end of these two most accomplished, but most ill-fated, artists. When the sad news of their death in a far-off land reached Dublin, many revived with sorrow and sympathy the remembrance of their appearance at the Gaiety in November, 1888. It seems but yesterday. She so graceful, so fond, and earnest, and he a very type of nature's gentleman—the most difficult part, somehow, to look or play on the stage. They appeared, suggestively enough, in two plays, "A Double Marriage" and "Young Heads and Old Hearts." Alas, for the bitterness of it! But a few short years had passed, and both had voluntarily ended a life that to the world seemed so full of hope and happiness and promise. Truly but a short and sorrowful passage; "From the Bridal to the Bier."

Few people will forget poor Richard Edgar, and how wonderfully he made instinct with life and humour the parts he played in "The Magistrate," "Aunt Jack," and "Dandy Dick." The names of Fred Leslie and Nellie Farren will also occur to everyone, and of Florence St. John, and "Carmen up to Date," of Willie Edouin, in "Niobe"; C. H. Hawtreys, and "The Arabian Nights," and the inimitable Alfred Maltby in "Betsy." For, clever and versatile, as is this excellent comedian, his name will always be inseparably associated with that of "Mr. Dawson, B.A.," in "Betsy." The London Gaiety Company have given us many amusing nights, and it is only necessary to mention Edward Terry and "Sweet Lavender" to conjure up remembrances of a delightful experience of that—as "Jeames" would say—most "homogeneous" actor.

In the "Yeomen of the Guard," produced in 1888, Mr. George Thorne, as "Jack Poyntz," made one of the greatest successes of his career. There was in his performance a singular combination of pathos and humour—an intensity of feeling and an artistic sensibility exceeding anything he had previously accomplished. This was particularly noticeable in his rendering of that quaint and touching number, "I have a Song to Sing."

The visits of Mr. Edward Compton and his talented wife, Miss Virginia Bateman, have for many years past been amongst the attractions of the Gaiety season. To him is due, undoubtedly, the recognition of an earnestness and steadfastness of purpose in maintaining the dignity of his profession by the refinement and cultured efficiency which have ever characterised the productions associated with his name. In an especial degree he has devoted himself to the worthy



J.F. Robertson
IN
"For the Crown"



Mlle. De Lussan



as
"MIGNON"

Edwin Booth
as "MACBETH"



Madame Nodjeska
as MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS



Mary Anderson in "A WINTERS TALE"



Mrs. Benson
as "BEATRICE"
"MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING"



as
David
Garrick
Mr. Charles Wyndham



Mr. Benson

"HAMLET"



as
Dorothy
Quickshank
Miss Mary Moore in "ROSEMARY"

interpretation of the works of Sheridan, Goldsmith, O'Keeffe and other great Irish dramatists, and any allusion to the success he has achieved would be manifestly incomplete that did not include reference to the veteran, Mr. Lewis Ball, than whom the stage does not afford a worthier or better representative; and to Miss Eleanor Aitken, a genuine actress of the old school, who adorned every part she played. In December, 1889, Mrs. Langtry appeared in the "Honeymoon," and the Pantomime of "Aladdin" followed in due course.

Mr. F. R. Benson has established for himself a name as a Shakespearean actor, which in Dublin stands, perhaps, higher than that of any other living actor. In October, 1890, he filled an engagement, during which he played "Hamlet," "Twelfth Night," "Midsummer's Night Dream," "Much ado about Nothing," and "Comedy of Errors." He had also appeared in "Julius Cæsar" and as "Othello," "Shylock," etc. His "Hamlet" was in every respect one of the most scholarly and one of the most universally impressive that our generation has brought forward. If the actor's work be mainly—as a great actor has himself expressed it—to realize by his sympathy the image in the poet's mind, and, by the exercise of his art, use his natural powers to the best advantage; to give to the author's thoughts form and substance, colour and light—if this be so, then Mr. Benson will indeed be admitted to be a great actor. In nothing does he "o'erstep the modesty of nature," his delivery is calm, reserved, most *natural*, his gestures a model of classical grace and dignity; his passionate utterances are never marred by any vestige of rant, and like a true artist he surrounds himself by artists capable of giving a worthy interpretation to the noble plays he produces. Indeed, it has been pointed out that Mr. Benson rather subordinates himself, and strives to realize a sufficiently good all-round performance. In "Much ado about Nothing" Mr. and Mrs. Benson were excellent as "Benedict" and "Beatrice," and the part of "Dogberry" has never been better done than by Mr. Weir. In May, 1891, Mr. Benson's Company gave a most meritorious representation of "The Tempest."

"La Cigale" was produced for the first time in May, 1891, and was greatly admired, and it was followed by Grace Hawthorn in "Theodora." She subsequently appeared in "The Royal Divorce." In October of the same year Mr. John Hare, one of the most sterling actors of whom the stage can boast, and one of the few remaining links between the present and past generations of artists, appeared in "A Pair of Spectacles." In April of the following year "The Vicar of Bray" was first performed here, and it was made memorable by the inimitable performance of Jack Dallas as "The Vicar." In May, Mr. Wilson Barrett attracted large audiences by his earnest performances of "Claudian," "Ben Macree," and "Belphegor." He also appeared as "Hamlet" with some effect. Mr. Louis Calvert's engagements have always been productive of pleasure. One of his most recent successes was, of course, his "Falstaff" to the "Hotspur" of Mr. Tree, and his "Hotspur" on the previous night. It was in October, 1892, that Mr. and

Mrs. Crotty appeared with Rossini's "Cinderella," a clever performance, and one that drew good audiences to the Gaiety, but somehow the work had but a brief career. Miss Cissy Graham's entertaining "Triple Bill" followed, and after it came a visit from Mr. Wyndham, who appeared in the old play of "Still Waters Run Deep."

"Haddon Hall" was produced in April, 1893, by D'Oyly Carte's Company, and with great success. The Gaiety Company, with Fred Leslie and Nellie Farren, filled an engagement in September. In October, 1893, Mr. George Alexander and the St. James' Theatre Company opened an engagement which attracted a very great amount of public interest. It brought with it Mr. Pinero's clever, but in many respects unwholesome play, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray"—a play which, in a striking degree illustrated the license that had sprung up in the modern stage. The work, nevertheless, was a very remarkable dramatic achievement, and its performance was a revelation of good acting. In it Mrs. Patrick Campbell, as "Paula," made quite a wonderful success—a most impressive artistic triumph, and Miss Maude Millet, in a part full of pathos, proved herself possessed of rare ability. The Company also appeared in "Liberty Hall" and "Lady Windermere's Fan." Mr. Alexander distinguishes himself by his intensely artistic performances. In fact, his engagement was one of the most brilliantly successful of the season. One of the best-played parts in "Liberty Hall" was that of "Old Todman," the poor little bookseller, in which Mr. Edward Righton proved himself an excellent character actor. Who can forget the combined sympathy, humour, and pathos with which the half-starved old enthusiast reflectively inquired:—"I wonder am I too close to Mudie's?"

It was in December following that "Charley's Aunt" made her bow to a Gaiety audience. She has certainly by no means worn out the warm welcome she then received. In this year, too, Mr. Arthur Roberts made a famous hit as "Claude Du Val." Many actors have proved in his case that "imitation is the sincerest flattery," but not one of them is in the same hemisphere with him, so far as his peculiar "patter" and style of humour are concerned.

Perhaps the most notable engagement in 1890, was that of Mr. Beerbohm Tree, who appeared in "The Ballad Monger," "Man's Shadow," and "The Red Lamp." He revelled in bewildering contrasts of character, and it was curious to note the perplexity of those who had only seen him, say, as "Demetrius," in their effort to identify him as "Gringoire." The latter created something of a sensation when first performed. As in the case of Mary Anderson's success as "Clarice" in the sketch of "Comedy and Tragedy," so Mr. Tree's extraordinary earnestness as the People's Poet in this little play took the audience by surprise, and carried them by storm. Since then Mr. Tree has extended his already vast repertoire, and so we find the gentleman who but a comparatively short time before appeared as the "Rev. Mr. Spalding," in the "Private Secretary," as well as "Macari" and in "Madame Favart," blossoming

into a full-blown "Hamlet," and one who has gained a world of earnest adherents for his fine interpretation of that most difficult of all parts. His successes as "Svengali" and "Hotspur" are too recent to need any observation.

In November, 1893, we had a very interesting engagement, namely, that of Sir Augustus Harris's Italian Opera Company, in which our countryman, Mr. Joseph O'Mara, sang with considerable success. His most notable part was "Don Jose" in "Carmen." His singing of the "Flower Song" formed a memorable feature of the night, being full of fervour and expression. Mdlle. Gulia Ravoglia was the "Carmen," and a very effective performance it was. Signor Maggi was a most picturesque "Escamillo," and Signor Corsi the funniest possible "Remendado." The Sisters Ravoglia attracted much attention by their performance of "Orpheus and Eurydice." The repertory included "Faust," "Pagliacci," "Lohengrin," "Cavalleria," "L'Amico Fritz," etc.

The following season of English opera was chiefly remarkable for the uncommonly fine performance of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet," with Hedmond as "Romeo" and Mdlle. Esty as "Juliet." But by far the most important achievement of the night was the "Friar Lawrence" of Signor Abramoff, whose popularity in Dublin was great. It is a part to which his really remarkable artistic power lent an especial interest. In the potion scene there is some striking declamatory and descriptive music for the bass, and it was magnificently declaimed by him. There was a dignity and grace characterizing his entire performance which tended to give quite an elevated tone to the dramatic phase of the opera, and his rich and sonorous notes were listened to with unqualified pleasure. Reference to the English version of "Romeo and Juliet" would be incomplete that did not allude in terms of special praise to the phenomenally fine performance of Mdlle. De Lusan and Barton McGuckin during a previous season. It was unquestionably the finest and most memorable representation of the opera that has ever been given in Dublin.

Mr. Wyndham had a short season with the "Bauble Shop" and "Brighton." In the latter he is seen, perhaps, at his very best. In March, 1894, we had "Utopia, Limited." Yet another example of the apparently unlimited supply of melody and versification possessed by Sullivan and Gilbert. The opera, however, proved not by any means one of the best which they have achieved, although some of its scenes are irresistibly amusing, and its music is charming. It was their first work after the renewal of the, for a time, suspended partnership. The scene that most tickled the fancy of the audience on the first night was that in which the King, attired as a Field-Marshal, and the "Six Flowers of Progress" range themselves in front of the stage like Christy Minstrels, and detail the reforms effected by the new *regime* in a song on the lines of the Moore and Burgess glees. It and the dance of the "Wise Men" were excruciatingly funny.



It is hardly necessary to particularize the engagements which since then have occupied the Gaiety, for they are, of course, familiar to everyone. Reference has been made to the fact that constant watchfulness and every effort have been exercised by the management to keep the Theatre furnished with the best and most recent appliances for the comfort of the audience and the beauty of the auditorium. The old drop scene has given place to a magnificent yellow-gold curtain of brocade silk, which cost several hundreds of pounds, and no Theatre in the kingdom can boast of one more beautiful. Within the past year the house has been completely overhauled and re-decorated from floor to roof, whilst many structural and sanitary improvements have been effected, and if the words of praise and congratulation spoken and written twenty-five golden years ago were deserved, with what confidence may one not now say that the Theatre has indeed fulfilled its mission, and that Mr. Gunn has kept faith with those for whom he catered with such unceasing zeal.

The sketch now given of some of the chief Theatrical events of these twenty-five years is of necessity, but superficial and inadequate. Limitations of space have made many omissions inevitable; but it may at least remind those who read even the names and variety of the engagements, that there has been no lethargy on the part of those responsible for the administration of the Theatre, that enterprise and judgment have gone hand in hand with the exacting public need for what was best and newest, and that when the history of the Dublin stage comes to be written, there will be no brighter pages than those that record the management of the Gaiety by Mr. Gunn during the period marked by its Silver Jubilee.





